

# HAZARD VS. HARM

A hazard is something that may cause harm to your health. You cannot be harmed by a hazard unless you come in contact with it. Exposure is the pathway that links hazard to harm.

*For example, you might have cleaning solution under your kitchen cabinet. The cleaner is a hazard and will cause harm if swallowed, spilled on your skin or breathed in. However, if the cleaner stays closed and in your cabinet or used properly, it will not cause you harm.*

You can be harmed in many different ways when you come in contact with a hazard. You might be harmed when a hazard touches or breaks your skin, is breathed in, eaten or swallowed.

Here are some examples:

HAZARD Something that can cause harm, injury or loss	+ CONTACT Exposure to a hazard	= HARM Injury that may occur to your health
Bleach	Spilled on skin	Chemical burn
Under-cooked meats	Eating under-cooked meats	Food poisoning, vomiting and loose stool
Cigarette smoke	Breathing in smoke from cigarettes	Increased risk of respiratory illnesses such as asthma and lung cancer
Sunshine (UV rays)	Exposure to the sun's harmful rays	Sunburn, increased risk of skin cancer

## YOU CANNOT BE HARMED BY A HAZARD UNLESS YOU COME IN CONTACT WITH IT.

Whether at home, work or play, you may encounter chemicals, physical hazards and substances in your air, water and soil on a daily basis. **A lot of the time you can control your contact and take steps to reduce harm by thinking ahead and protecting yourself.**

Sometimes you cannot control contact with a hazard. That is why the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) sets rules for companies that may produce hazards. The rules are designed to minimize the hazard and potential exposure of the public.

*For example, if a harmful chemical (hazard) spills on the ground it could get into the ground water. If you have a private well, the polluted ground water may make your drinking water harmful. However, If your drinking water is coming from a regulated public water system your water should not cause harm.*

Sometimes it is impossible for you or DHEC to prevent contact with a hazard. It is always important to know your environment and what will, and will not, harm you and your family. See [www.scdhec.gov/epht](http://www.scdhec.gov/epht) for more information.

**REMEMBER:  
YOU CANNOT BE  
HARMED BY A HAZARD  
UNLESS YOU COME IN  
CONTACT WITH IT.**

# REDUCE YOUR RISK!

- Read and follow labels and instructions
- Wash your hands
- Avoid cigarette smoke or smoking
- Wear sunscreen
- Cook foods properly
- Wear your seatbelt
- Wear protective gear at work



**INCREASE YOUR AWARENESS!  
REDUCE YOUR RISK OF HARM!**



**TRACK IT.  
MAP IT.  
USE IT.**

SC Environmental  
Public Health Tracking  
[www.scdhec.gov/epht](http://www.scdhec.gov/epht)



South Carolina Department of Health  
and Environmental Control

[www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)

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*We promote and protect the health of the public  
and the environment.*